

Department of Veterans Affairs

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home page (see §1.552(a) for the pertinent Internet address) and FOIA fee guidance provided by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Uniform Freedom of Information Act Fee Schedule and Guidelines, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/inforeg/foia_fee_schedule_1987.pdf.

(b) Requests for records about an individual protected by the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, including one's own records and records that pertain to an individual and that may be sensitive, will be processed under the FOIA and the Privacy Act. In addition to the following FOIA regulations, see §§1.575 through 1.584 for regulations applicable to Privacy Act records.

(c) Requests for records relating to a claim administered by VA pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 5701 will be processed under the FOIA and 38 U.S.C. 5701. In addition to the following FOIA regulations, see §§1.500 through 1.527 for regulations implementing 38 U.S.C. 5701.

(d) Requests for records relating to healthcare quality assurance reviews pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 5705 will be processed under the FOIA and 38 U.S.C. 5705. In addition to the following FOIA regulations, see 38 CFR 17.500 through 17.511 for regulations implementing 38 U.S.C. 5705.

(e) Requests for records relating to treatment for the conditions specified in 38 U.S.C. 7332, such as drug abuse, alcoholism or alcohol abuse, infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), or sickle cell anemia, will be processed under the FOIA and 38 U.S.C. 7332. In addition to the following FOIA regulations, see §§1.460 through 1.499 of this part for regulations implementing 38 U.S.C. 7332.

(Authority: Sections 1.550 to 1.562 issued under 72 Stat. 1114; 38 U.S.C. 501, 552, 552a, 5701, 5705, 7332.)G1986

[76 FR 51892, Aug. 19, 2011]

§ 1.551 Definitions.

As used in §§1.550 through 1.562, the following definitions apply:

Agency means any executive department, military department, government corporation, government controlled corporation, or other establishment in the executive branch of the

Federal government, or independent regulatory entity.

Appeal means a requester's written disagreement with an adverse determination under the FOIA.

Beneficiary means a veteran or other individual who has received benefits (including medical benefits) or has applied for benefits pursuant to title 38, United States Code.

Benefits records means an individual's records, which pertain to programs under any of the benefits laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Business day means the time during which typical Federal government offices are open for normal business. It does not include Saturdays, Sundays, or Federal legal public holidays. The term "day" means business day unless otherwise specified.

Business information means confidential or privileged commercial or financial information obtained by VA from a submitter that may be protected from disclosure under Exemption 4 of the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4).

Component means each distinct VA entity, including Administrations, staff offices, services, or facilities.

Expedited processing means giving a FOIA request priority for processing ahead of other pending requests because VA has determined that the requester has shown an exceptional need or urgency for the records as provided in these regulations.

Fees. For fees and fee-related definitions, see §1.561.

FOIA Officer means the individual within a VA component whose responsibilities include addressing and granting or denying requests for records under the FOIA.

Perfected request means a written FOIA request that meets the requirements set forth in §1.554 of this part and for which there are no remaining issues about the payment of applicable fees or any other matter that requires resolution prior to processing.

Reading room means space made available, as needed, in VA components where records are available for review pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(2). Ordinarily, the VA component providing a public reading room space will be the component that maintains the record.

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Record means a document, a portion of a document, and information contained within a document, and can include information derived from a document or a database. Such documents may be maintained in paper, electronic, and other forms, but do not include objects, such as tissue slides, blood samples, or computer hardware.

Request means a written demand for records under the FOIA as described below. The term *request* includes any action emanating from the initial demand for records, including an appeal related to the initial demand.

Requester means, generally, any individual, partnership, corporation, association, or foreign or state or local government, which has made a demand to access an agency record.

Submitter means any person or entity (including corporations, state, local and tribal governments and foreign governments) from whom VA obtains trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information either directly or indirectly.

VA means the Department of Veterans Affairs.

VA Central Office (VACO) means the headquarters of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The mailing address is 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420.

Written or in writing means communications such as letters, photocopies of letters, electronic mail, and facsimiles (faxes), and does not include any form of oral communication.

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§ 1.552 General provisions.

(a) *Additional information.* The following Internet link will provide access to VA's information that is electronically available under the FOIA: <http://www.foia.va.gov/>.

(b) *Public Liaisons.* VA has made available FOIA Public Liaisons to assist in the resolution of disputes between the agency and the requester. Contact information for VA's FOIA Public Liaisons can be found on VA's FOIA home page. See § 1.552(a) for the pertinent Internet address.

(c) *FOIA Annual Report.* Under 5 U.S.C. 552(e), VA is required to prepare an annual report regarding its FOIA activities. The report includes informa-

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tion about FOIA requests and appeals. Copies of VA's annual FOIA report may be obtained from VA's Chief FOIA Officer or by visiting VA's FOIA Web site. See § 1.552(a) for the pertinent Internet address.

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§ 1.553 Public reading rooms and discretionary disclosures.

(a) VA maintains a public reading room electronically at its FOIA home page on the Internet, which contains the records that the FOIA requires to be regularly made available for public inspection and copying. See § 1.552(a) for the pertinent Internet address. Information routinely provided to the public (press releases, for example) may be provided without following these sections. In addition, as a matter of policy, VA may make discretionary releases of records or information exempt from disclosure under the FOIA when permitted to do so in accordance with current law and governmental policy. Each VA component is responsible for determining which of its records are required to be made available and for making its records available electronically.

(b) VA may process, in accordance with the FOIA, records that it makes publicly available. Information in a public reading room record will be redacted, for example, if its release would be a clearly unwarranted invasion of an individual's personal privacy.

(c) Some VA components may also maintain physical public reading rooms. Information regarding these components and their contact information is available on VA's FOIA home page on the Internet. See § 1.552(a) for the pertinent Internet address. If the requester does not have access to the Internet and wishes to obtain information regarding publicly available information or components that have a physical reading room, he or she may write VA's Chief FOIA Officer at the following address: Department of Veterans Affairs, FOIA Service (005R1C), 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420.

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